

a project of the Tides Center

Pew & Internet & American Life

PROJECT

E-Government:

How Americans Interact with Government
and the Role of Cyberspace

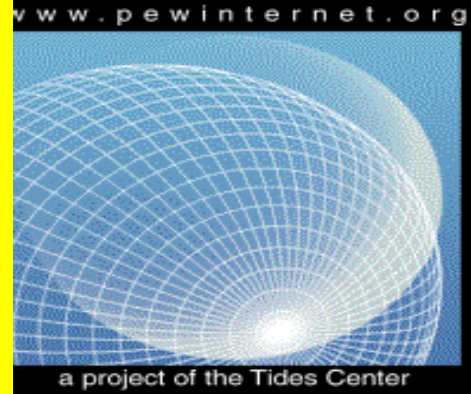
John B. Horrigan

jhorrigan@pewinternet.org

January 27, 2004

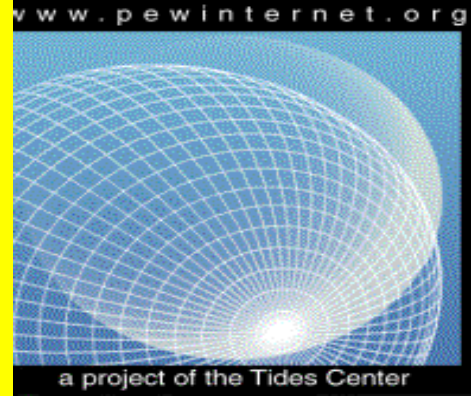
Presented at the

RAND Corporation



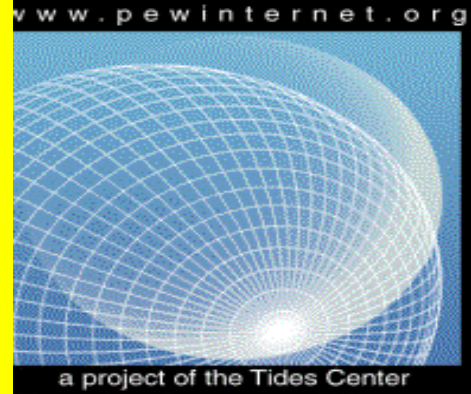
Presentation Outline

- What is e-Gov?
- Why studying it matters?
- Summarize past Pew Internet research
- Findings from latest e-gov study
- What it adds up to ...



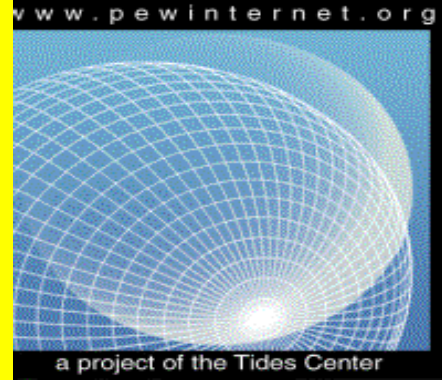
Definition of E-government

- “The current potential to build government services and practices using existing [information] technologies and applications.” – Jane Fountain
- “E-government ... calls for rethinking the way government functions are carried out to improve some processes, to introduce new one and to replace those that require it.” -- RAND Europe
- Two components to common conceptions about e-government:
 - Political participation and deliberation
 - Public administration → service delivery



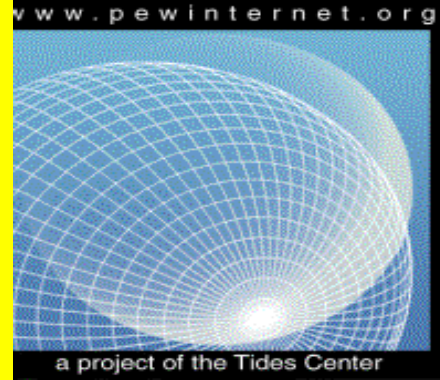
Why e-Gov Matters

- There's lots of it, but not always well-conceived:
 - Sometimes poor underlying assumptions
- Numerous potential benefits:
 - Cost savings
 - Better service delivery
 - Enhance participation → build social capital
- “The true test of a good government is its ability to produce good administration” — Alexander Hamilton



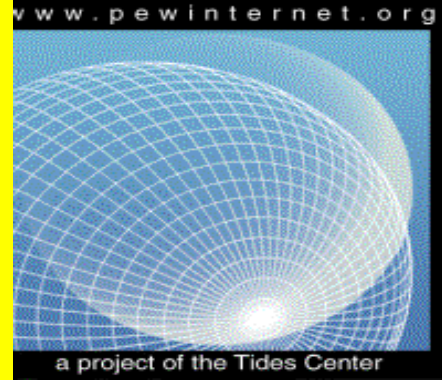
Past Pew Internet Research

- What users do & think with respect to e-gov:
 - 66% of Internet users have gone to a government Web site
 - Most (80%) find what they are looking for at government Web sites
 - Users go more frequently to federal and state sites, and get better results there than at local ones.
 - Lots of basic information searching; top searches:
 - Tourist/recreational information
 - Research
 - Get forms
 - Service inquiry
 - Policy issues



Past Pew Internet Research

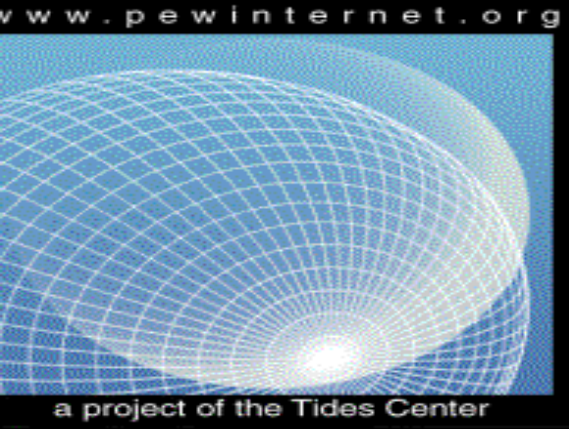
- Use of Net by local government officials:
 - 88% of local govt. officials use email
 - 73% say email helps them better understand public opinion
 - 56% say it has improved relations with community
 - 32% say email has influenced policy decisions
 - Phone calls still take primacy for officials
- Rising expectations:
 - 65% of all Americans expect government info to be on the Web
 - 39% of all Americans (including 10% of non-Net users) will turn to the Net first for next government contact.
 - 37% of all Americans will turn to phone



Contact with government & the Internet's Role

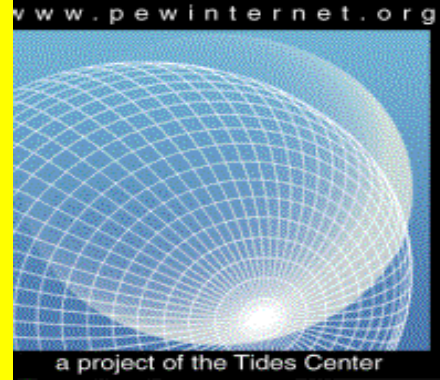
July 2003 RDD survey of 2,925 adult Americans

- What share of people contact government?
- By what means do they contact government?
- What do they contact government for?
- Which levels of government?
- Are they successful? Satisfied?
- What are people's preferred method of contact?
- What's the overall impact of e-Gov for users?



Contacting Government

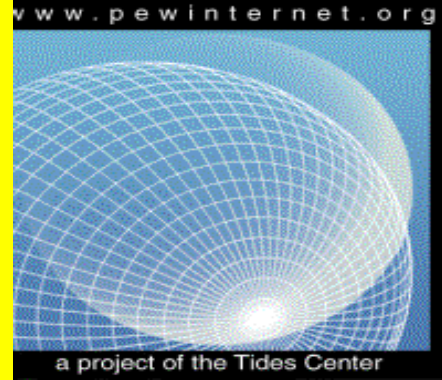
- 54% of all Americans contacted the government last year
 - 72% of Internet users contacted government
 - 23% of non-Internet users contacted government
 - ✓ 63% of all Americans are Internet users
- 54% figure excludes those whose last contact with government was mailing taxes



What people did the last time they contacted government ... *

- Carry out a transaction → 30%
- Get information about specific question → 25%
- Express an opinion → 19%
- Get help solving a problem → 11%
- Other → 7%

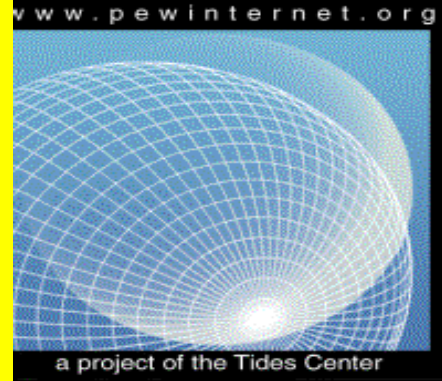
*** Based on contact within past year not related to mailing in a tax return**



Level of government people contact*

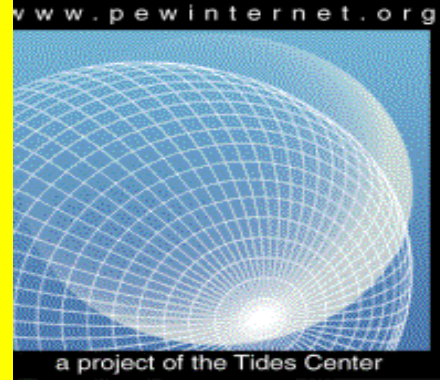
- State → 35%
- Federal → 32%
- Local → 19%
- Combination → 7%

* Based on contact within past year not related to mailing in a tax return



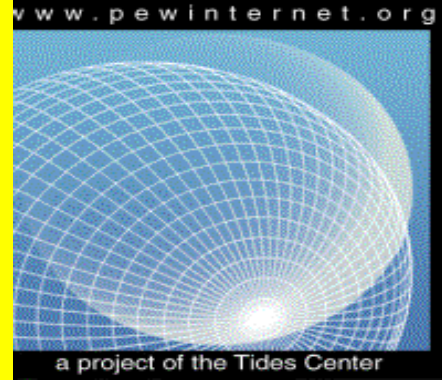
What Net users seek

- 66% look for general information from federal, state, or local sites
- 27% have sent emails to government
- 28% have gotten advice about a health or safety issue from a government agency
- 34% get recreational/tourist information
- 41% research official documents/statistics
- 23% get information about or apply for benefits
- 30% have used the Internet to try to change a government policy or affect a vote on a law



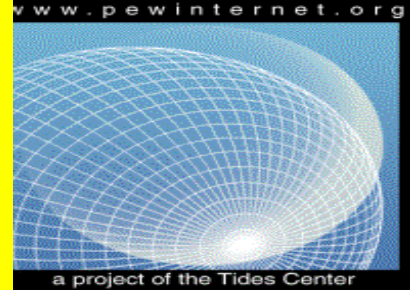
Means of Contact

- Method of contact last time ...
 - 42% → phone
 - 29% → Web site
 - 20% → in person
 - 18% → email
 - 17% → letter
- Preferred means of contact ...
 - 38% → phone
 - 17% → Web site
 - 15% → in person
 - 15% → letter
 - 9% → email
- People use multiple channels



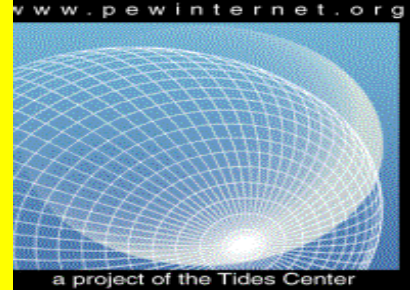
Success & Satisfaction

- 76% of all who contacted government were “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with experience
- 63% were successful in accomplishing what they wanted
 - 65% of Internet users were successful
 - 53% of non-Internet users were successful
- 46% said contact took about the amount of time they expected
- 28% said it took more time than expected



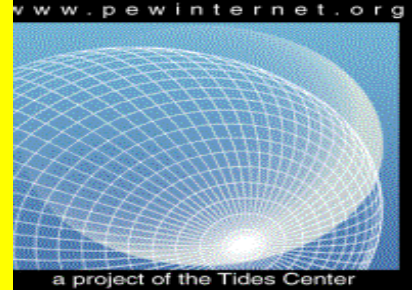
Preferred Means of Contact by Issue Area (I)

	Over the Phone	On the Internet	Some other way
Personal Tax Issue	51%	17%	26%
Auto License or Permit	16	22	54
License for personal project	21	20	49
Express Opinion	28	27	38
Government Benefits	28	39	24



Preferred Means of Contact by Issue Area (II)

	Over the Phone	On the Internet	Some other way
Research (school or work)	18%	57%	16%
Programs agencies offer	23	53	17
Recreational licenses	17	26	45
Professional license	21	25	40
Recreational or tourism activities	26	49	18

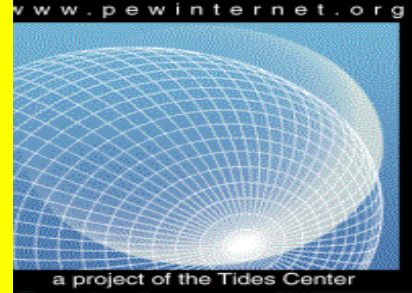


Does the Internet help?

- How much, if at all, has the Internet improved the way you interact with government?

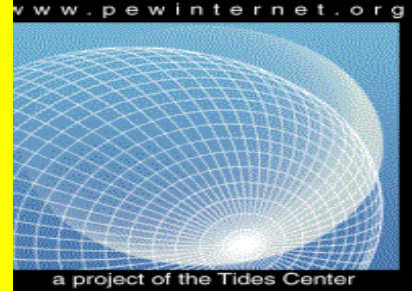
(asked only of Internet users)

	A lot	Some	A little	Not at all
Federal	27%	23%	16%	27%
State	25	24	19	26
Local	18	20	18	37



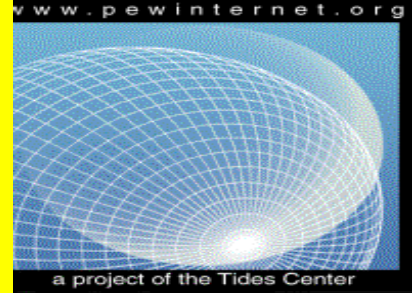
Some Puzzles ...

- Why do Internet users contact government more often than non-users?
- Why do Internet users report higher success rates with their interactions with government?
- Could be Internet users possess certain characteristics that increase likelihood of contact or probability of success



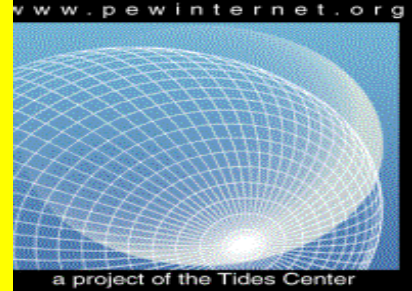
Answers: Contact

- Internet seems to increase likelihood that people contact government ...
 - Controlling for lots of demographic, socio-economic, and attitudinal factors
 - Withstands worry about possible bias in survey design



Answers: Success

- Being an Internet user, in itself, isn't associated with successful outcomes with government
- Preferred channels of contact matters:
 - Those who prefer the phone or the Internet are more likely to be successful
 - Those who prefer to write letters or show up in person are less likely to be successful
- Implication → Internet has been well integrated into bureaucratic routines for solving problems



Summing Up

- Internet seems to increase frequency of contact with government – even controlling for baseline level of trust
 - May enhance overall trust in government
- Internet contributes to successful outcomes in citizen-government interactions.
- But other channels – the phone particularly – still matter.